


Public Health Threats

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

A public health emergency can happen at any time. It is very important to plan and prepare for emergencies in advance. Public health threats facing Mississippi today include pandemic flu, weather-related hazards such as tornadoes and hurricanes, and the safety of the state's water supply. The Mississippi Department of Health (MDH) has one of the most highly-trained public health response teams in the nation, and we are fully prepared to protect Mississippians when disaster strikes.

Weather-Related Hazards



As all Mississippians know, weather-related hazards, from tornadoes to hurricanes, can strike at any time. The Mississippi Department of Health is prepared to address these and other natural disasters that pose possible public health threats.

Once a hurricane is predicted to hit Mississippi, MDH staff will be deployed to the area that will be affected. Once there, they can activate plans in advance to help ensure the safety of residents in the affected areas. If necessary, staff will determine evacuation procedures and ensure that ambulances are available to transport residents as needed.

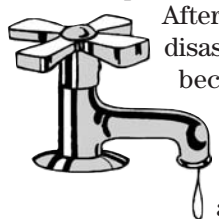
While hurricanes can be predicted in advance, tornadoes can strike rapidly, without warning, and sometimes without a thunderstorm in the vicinity. The following weather signs may mean that a tornado is approaching: a dark or green-colored sky; a large, dark, low-lying cloud; large hail; or a loud roar that sounds like a freight train.

If you are under a hurricane or tornado warning, you need to seek shelter immediately! Before a storm strikes, take these basic preparedness steps:

- Make an emergency kit with bottled water, non-perishable food, and first aid (for more on making an emergency kit, see the back page of this supplement).
- Create a family communications plan, complete with information on who to call, where to meet in the event of an emergency and copies of phone numbers and important information.
- Learn about your community's emergency plans, warning signals, evacuation routes and locations of emergency shelters.
- Identify potential home hazards. Be prepared to turn off electrical power when there is standing water or fallen power lines. Before you evacuate, turn off gas, water and electrical power.
- Buy a fire extinguisher and make sure your family knows where to find it and how to use it.
- Locate and secure your important papers, such as insurance policies, wills, licenses, stocks, etc.

- Inform local authorities about any special needs (i.e., elderly or bedridden people, or anyone with a disability). Never ignore an evacuation order! Be sure to take only essential items.

Safety of Water Supply



After a flood, hurricane or other natural disaster, the public water supply can become contaminated. Should this occur, the Mississippi Department of Health has a plan in place to ensure that residents remain safe and secure. It is important to listen for public announcements about the safety of the water supply, as drinking contaminated water may cause illness.

We're Working to Protect YOU!

Flu Clinics—A Success!

During the nationwide flu vaccine shortage in the fall of 2004, the Mississippi Department of Health enacted a statewide plan to distribute vaccinations in a short amount of time. Typically, a mass vaccination effort can take months to execute, and clinics can become overwhelmed with more patients than they are equipped to handle. To combat these obstacles, MDH launched the "Do It For Yourself: Do It For Your Family" campaign to ensure that high-risk residents who needed protection from the flu were vaccinated first. Flu clinics were set up in every county in Mississippi with MDH staff dispatched to each location to vaccinate residents. Through a coordinated communications effort, MDH informed the public of the locations of the clinics, and tens of thousands received their flu shots. In the end, MDH administered more than 159,000 flu vaccinations during the mass vaccination clinics.

MDH Saves Lives

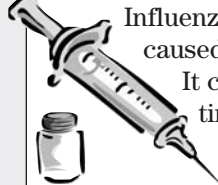
In April 2004, an Amtrak train derailed in central Mississippi, killing one person and injuring dozens of others. From its Emergency Operations Center in Jackson, the Mississippi Department of Health dispatched emergency response personnel to the scene and to area hospitals. Staff on scene were able to assist local first responders by quickly determining the number and level of injuries and helping to coordinate the transfer of those injured to appropriate facilities. Once en route, MDH staff posted at local hospitals were notified of the number of incoming patients and the severity of their injuries. As a result, local hospitals were not inundated with patients, and victims of the derailment were able to get the care they needed in an organized, effective manner. ♦

What do I do if my water is contaminated?

Safe drinking water includes bottled, boiled, or treated water. Here are some general rules to follow concerning water for drinking and cooking to avoid effects of contamination:

- Drink only bottled, boiled or treated water until your supply is tested and found safe. Boiling water kills harmful bacteria and parasites; bringing water to a rolling boil for one minute will kill most organisms.
- Do not use contaminated water to wash dishes, brush your teeth, wash and prepare food, or to make ice.
- If you use bottled water, know where it came from. Otherwise, water should be boiled or treated before use.
- When boiling is not possible, water may also be treated with chlorine or iodine tablets, or by mixing six drops (1/8 teaspoon) of unscented, ordinary household chlorine bleach (5.25 percent sodium hypochlorite) per gallon of water. If the water is cloudy, use 12 drops (1/4 teaspoon). Mix the solution thoroughly, and let stand for about 30 minutes. However, these treatments will not kill parasitic organisms.
- Containers for water should be rinsed with a bleach solution before reusing them. Use water storage tanks and other types of containers with caution.
- Do not rely on untested devices for decontaminating water.

Influenza (Flu)



Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness caused by several types of influenza viruses.

It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death.

Unlike the gradual changes that occur in the influenza viruses that appear each year during flu season, a pandemic influenza virus is one that represents a major, sudden shift in the virus' structure which increases its ability to cause illness in a large proportion of the population.

In the event of a widespread flu outbreak, MDH is prepared to respond. MDH has disease tracking capabilities and can alert thousands of health care providers within minutes of a crisis. MDH has trained staff and partners who can respond to public health emergencies and has coordinated with federal agencies and state partners to receive and distribute the vaccine once it is made available. MDH also has the capacity to vaccinate high-risk residents in a short amount of time.

Prevention

It is important to prepare ahead of time to avoid catching or spreading the flu.

- Get your flu shot.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Avoid close contact with others.
- Clean your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing. ♦



Family Readiness Checklist

Are You Prepared?

Whether a disaster is natural or man-made, preparation is essential. Here is a list of activities you and your family should do to be prepared for the next emergency.

- ✓ **DISCUSS** the type of hazards that could affect your family.
- ✓ **DETERMINE** escape routes from your home and places to meet. Pick places for your family to meet outside your home in case of a sudden emergency, like a fire, or outside your neighborhood if you cannot return home.
- ✓ **DESIGNATE** an out-of-state friend or relative as the family contact, so all your family members have a single point of contact.
- ✓ **PLAN** for pets now if you need to evacuate.
- ✓ **POST** emergency numbers by your phones, in your wallet or purse and make sure your children know how and when to call 911.
- ✓ **STOCK** non-perishable emergency supplies and a disaster readiness kit.

Disaster Readiness Kit

Every family in Mississippi needs a disaster readiness kit. There are six basics you should stock for your home: water, food, first aid supplies, clothing and bedding, tools and emergency supplies and special items. Keep the items in an easy-to-carry container, such as a covered trash container, backpack or duffle bag.

Water

- ☐ Keep at least a three-day supply of water per person (two quarts for drinking, two quarts for each person in your household for food preparation/sanitation).
- ☐ Store one gallon of water per person per day.
- ☐ Store water in plastic containers such as soft drink bottles.

Food

- ☐ Store at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food.
- ☐ Select foods that require no refrigeration, preparation or cooking and little or no water.
- ☐ Select food items that are compact and lightweight such as ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits, and vegetables, canned juices, staples (salt, sugar, pepper, spices, etc.), high-energy foods, vitamins, food for infants and comfort foods.

First Aid Kit

Assemble a first aid kit for your home and one for each car. A basic first aid kit should include items such as adhesive bandages, scissors, tweezers, latex gloves, thermometer, sunscreen, and non-prescription drugs such as aspirin/non-aspirin pain reliever and antacid.

Tools and Emergency Supplies

Keep general supplies and sanitation items in stock. Key items to include are paper cups, plates and plastic utensils, cash or travelers' checks, battery-operated radio and extra batteries, flashlight, fire extinguisher, compass, plastic storage containers, matches in a water-proof container, pencils and paper and a needle and thread. Sanitation items include toilet paper, soap, personal hygiene items, garbage bags and disinfectant.

Clothing and Bedding

Include at least one complete change of clothing and footwear per person.

- ☐ Sturdy shoes or work boots
- ☐ Rain gear
- ☐ Blankets or sleeping bags
- ☐ Hat and gloves
- ☐ Thermal underwear
- ☐ Sunglasses

Special Items

Remember family members with special requirements, such as infants, elderly or disabled persons. Keep records of all important family documents, such as wills, insurance policies, passports and bank account numbers. And remember books and games for entertainment.

Contact the Mississippi Department of Health, nights, weekends and holidays for health information in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese and in TTY format (1-866-HLTHY4U or 1-866-458-4948).

Visit www.HealthyMS.com for more information on what to include in your readiness kit.

WHO ARE YOU GOING TO CALL?

My local Police Department _____

My local Fire Department _____

Designated Emergency Contact Person 1 _____

Designated Emergency Contact Person 2 _____

Family Doctor _____

Local Hospital _____

Pharmacist _____

Dentist _____

Local Health Department _____

Other _____